

the newsletter of Tarragon Solutions

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Firesheep abusers threaten public Wi-Fi networks

One of the great advances in computing on the move over the last few years has been the ability to sit in an Internet café, a hotel reception, a coffee shop, etc. and make use of the free Wi-Fi that many of these establishments offer. Thus, you can enjoy a coffee or a sandwich whilst checking your emails or updating information on the company database without the need for a subscription to various Wi-Fi providers.



Firesheep attempts humour through its logo

Unfortunately, the bad guys have seen the potential in this and some are taking advantage of a browser 'plug-in' called Firesheep.

Firesheep is a type of program known as a 'packet sniffer', which, one has to say, does sound rather unsavoury. Actually, packet sniffers are useful tools for legitimate network analysis work but less friendly in the wrong hands.

A malicious Firesheep user can sit on a public wireless network and wait for another user to visit a non-secured website (such as Facebook or Gmail, to name but two). Firesheep then captures information which subsequently can be used by the hacker to illicitly connect to that application.

For Facebook or Gmail, read your company server and all its applications and data and you can see why the potential harm of this type of attack is so great.

Firesheep can work only on networks that do not require a password of any kind, as found at many food & drink outlets and a worryingly high proportion of home Wi-Fi set ups. Even a simple and publicly known network password will prevent Firesheep from functioning, as will using the secure (*https* rather than *http*) version of the website name, if one exists: e.g. <https://www.facebook.com> or <https://mail.google.com>

However, there is a way to ensure that your company information is always safe from Firesheep and other similar tools, even if you do use an open Wi-Fi network.

A **virtual private network** or VPN will keep your information secure by creating an encrypted and private "tunnel" between the company server and your mobile device. Many of Tarragon's clients already use a VPN for their office-to-office internet communications as, indeed, we do ourselves between the London Colney and Huntingdon Accounts offices. If you or your colleagues use laptops or other mobile computing devices to access your company network whilst 'on the road', we would be pleased to talk with you about how to improve your chances of saying "Baa!" to a Firesheep abuser!

Gary Parratt – new pastures beckon

We're sad to report that, after six years working at the sharp end of Tarragon, Gary Parratt has decided that the time of his life was right to make a career change so, at the end of October, he left our employ.

Gary is taking a break for a couple of months to spend time with family members who are visiting England from their home in Canada then, after Christmas, he'll embark on his new career.

We're now in the process of hunting for a replacement but we'll miss Gary; we'll miss his enthusiasm in the office and we'll miss wondering what interesting snack food he'll bring in today. We're sure you'll miss him too.

We all wish Gary all the best with his future plans!

Email certificates: for those important little messages

Let's face it, probably the vast majority of emails we send aren't sensitive, even though we'd rather they didn't fall into the wrong hands. However, some emails can contain business or personally sensitive information so it would be good to know that, should they go astray or be intercepted on their journey, they'll be secure from prying eyes.

Email Certification provides a secure container for emails, allowing you to encrypt and digitally sign emails so they can be read only by the intended recipient.

Encryption means that only your intended recipient will be able to read the mail while the digital signature allows them to confirm you as the sender and verify the message was not tampered with en route.

Email certificates are straightforward to implement and use and provide a highly cost-effective method of securing sensitive messages. For personal use, rather than business use, a digital certificate can even be free!

For more information, call us at Tarragon!

Microsoft's Ballmer dumps his stock...

...but don't read anything into it says CEO Steve

Over the last few days, Microsoft's CEO Steve Ballmer has sold most of his holding in Microsoft, almost 50 million shares worth a cool \$1.3billion, leaving him with just 4.2% of the company. By coincidence, former CEO Bill Gates has also been raising money (Christmas is **so** expensive these days) by selling 1 million Microsoft shares for around \$27million.

Ballmer insists there is nothing untoward in his action:

"Even though this is a personal financial matter, I want to be clear about this to avoid any confusion", he said in a statement.

"I am excited about our new products and the potential for our technology to change people's lives, and I remain fully committed to Microsoft and its success."

He added that he hopes to sell a total of up to 75 million shares by the end of '2010

CHRISTMAS OPENING TIMES - 2010

December 24th - Open until 1:30pm

December 27th - Closed

December 28th - Closed

December 29/30/31 - Open as normal

January 3rd - Closed



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